United States of Care is building a better future that includes a better postpartum experience for Black women.

Our health care system fails new mothers by not offering support or care in these vulnerable moments. This is on top of the racial disparities in maternal mortality rate: recent data shows that the mortality rate among Black women has skyrocketed to almost three times that of white women, regardless of their income or education.

Discover how postpartum care is experienced differently across the US.







Meet Crystal on her postpartum journey.

Crystal's narrative comprises real insights derived from patient listening sessions facilitated by US of Care in July 2023.

Day 1: The Birth

After hours of labor, Crystal holds her newborn for the first time. The moment is joyous, but Crystal doesn't feel an instant connection with her baby and is worried something is wrong.

Week 3: Sinking Deeper

Crystal is struggling to breastfeed. Nights are long and sleep is fragmented, leaving her exhausted and vulnerable, yet she feels the need to present as capable and strong.

"Everybody thinks we are just so strong like, 'Oh you are a Black woman, you can handle it. You'll get through it.'... but no, we are just like every other woman. We get tired."

- Black woman, Southeast

Month 3: Returning to Work

"There's a whole thing about the strong black women complex, it does affect us... we're supposed to be uncomfortable because we can deal with it."

- Black woman, Rural South

Month 8: Small Steps Forward

Crystal has established a sustainable routine. The days still feel heavy, but they are marked by small victories and pockets of joy as she builds a bond with her baby.

















Week 1: Homecoming

Crystal and her daughter, Jade, are discharged and Crystal's anxiety intensifies. She wants to tell her doctor but is worried she'll be seen as an aggressive or distant mother.

"... People are afraid to be aggressive about their health care, especially Black women, because we're [stereotyped as] 'aggressive'... we're trying so hard not to be the angry Black woman that we get neglected."

– Black woman, Rural South

Month 2: Seeking Help

Crystal is worried about insurance but sees her OB. She is ashamed she is struggling with motherhood and is screened for postpartum depression. After a formal diagnosis, she begins treatment.

"Money comes to mind...because a lot of times, to get good [coverage], you've got to pay the money for it. Then, even after you pay the money, it is the copays and deductibles and all these other things that go along with it"

- Black woman, Northeast

Month 6: Gaining Community

"My family was a big support. My mom [and] my sisters were a big support. Even my neighbor was a big support throughout my pregnancy. They checked in on me."

– Black woman, Northeast

Month 12: The Journey Continues

Crystal reflects on her struggles, the support of her community, and the bond she is still trying to build with her daughter, as she hopes for a brighter future.

"I like the idea that [support] is going to be continuous like it is going to continue with you for your physical, emotional...and physical health"

– Black woman, Northeast

If Crystal lives in
Mississippi, she will only
have access to 85
lactation consultants
compared with 452 in
Oregon. Both states have
comparable number of
births per year.¹



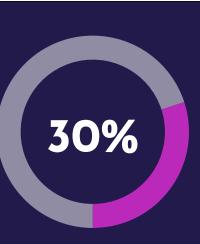
Only 25 US states (50%)
report postpartum
depression (PPD)
screening data captured
during the
postpartum phase.²



Arkansas has the highest PPD mortality rate with 45/100,000 deaths per live birth.

25 states (50%) lack reported data for postpartum mortality.³

45/ 100,000 Only 15 (30%) of US states have a statewide maternity leave policy. (Of those, most are at minimum only 8 weeks.)⁴



ZS analysis of public sources: (1) Access to Information – Lactation Consultant Counts (by state), International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) in the U.S. & Territories, 2019, CDC. (2) Maternal Mental Health – Provider Screenings for Postpartum Depression (by state), PRAMS Survey Data, 2021. (3) Maternal Mental Health – Postpartum Depression Death Rates (by state), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) & National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), 2018. (4) Healthcare Coverage – Maternity Leave Allowance Policy (by state), Parents.com, 2024.

Top high-/low-performing states across metric areas



Postpartum depression rate⁵

Highest performing: Vermont (8.7%) **Lowest performing:** Idaho (25.4%)



Employer-sponsored health coverage⁶

Highest performing: New Hampshire (68%)
Lowest performing: New Mexico (46%)



Postpartum doula counts (perinatal health workers)⁷

Highest performing: California (361) **Lowest performing:** North & South Dakota (2)



Stillbirth rates⁸

Highest performing: New Mexico (3.5) Lowest performing: Mississippi (10.6)